

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
April 3, 1930.

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 27, 1930.

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

HAVOC WROUGHT BY RAIN

Agricultural lands in many parts of the world are terribly ravaged by the erosive action of rain. On sloping ground, unless well protected by vegetation, every heavy shower washes immense quantities of soil down to the streams, and much of this eventually reaches the ocean. The top soil thus carried away is usually the most fertile and its loss is irreparable.

Some of the most striking examples of this destructive process are found in the United States, where it is estimated that rain erosion removes from the soil 126,000,000,000 pounds of plant-food material every year--about 21 times as much as is removed by crops. The area of once fertile land permanently ruined by the process amounts to many millions of acres. In a single county in the southeastern United States a total of 91,000 acres formerly under cultivation has been made unfit for agriculture.

The magnitude of such losses in the United States has been frequently pointed out during the past twenty-five years, but the Federal government has only recently taken serious steps to check the evil. Congress appropriated money last year for establishing a number of experiment stations, at which elaborate studies will be made of erosion and its effects on different kinds of soils under various topographic conditions and tests will be made of all known methods of protection. The most familiar protective measure is terracing.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and B Sts.
Washington, D.C.